It's Not Haunted

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It's Not Hell

Official Companion Zine

Season One

Created and Produced by ***Veronica California*** *and* ***Mark Whitten***

Written by ***Veronica California***

The Manager - ***Kelly Nienaltowski***
The Lobby Boy - ***Mark Whitten***
The Owner - ***Graham Rowat***
And ***Christa Lewis***

Music by ***Lauren Pokorney*** *and* ***West Rodri***
Special Guest Composer ***Zach Tatum-Drake***

The Hotel theme plays

The Hotel theme plays

In 2014 Mark and I jumped into making a podcast, The Theatre of Tomorrow, with absolutely no idea how to do any of it at all. That podcast was a tremendous piece of art that we are both extremely proud of, but it never broke out like we wanted.

In 2017 (I think) I got antsy and began work on a slew of other projects (Jelly Vision, Please Don't Listen to This, Fiddly Bits, a few more than never got out of the planning phase.) to keep myself creating and keep learning while navigating my first few years in LA. One of those projects was an experimental show designed around one directive: Getting an audience.

Horror was an easy choice, horror fans will give anything a shot. Keep the scripts short so they're easier to listen to and produce. Weekly episodes to help gain traction with listeners who have an abundance of entertainment options. Single monologues with one or two lines to break up the rhythm for the listener. A small, consistent cast, no sound design, and the same music for each episode. I was working at Hotel's at the time, and I've always found them scary, so that was that. The Hotel was born.

Originally planned as a three month 12 episode experiment with Mark and Kelly as the Lobby Boy and the Manager (written for them, but they had the option to swap roles if they wanted. Can you imagine?!) When Graham found out what we were doing he volunteered his services and I gladly wrote four episodes for him as the Owner.

I wrote the episodes quickly, often drunk after work, and never more than a single draft. I usually didn't know what I was going to write until I was writing it, trying to see how quickly I could write something good and dynamic and fun. I had never planned for anything beyond this little experiment. I mostly just wanted to see what would happen.

The result is a crunchy, pulpy, fun show that has been best described perhaps as "hearty horror stew". I've collected these sparse and peppered thoughts in this zine as I revisited season one. The show has grown and changed a lot, but at its core is this funky, grungy, colorful 90s Halloween party. If you're reading this then you're one of the invested, one of the curious, one of the hungry. Exactly who I made this show for.

Thanks for checking in.

-Veronica California

1.1 TED BARROW

- 215 is one of the only room numbers that isn't nothing. It's snugly in line with 217 (the shining) and 216 (the apartment this season was written in, as seen in Mike Flanagan's Absentia)

old Account

- Ted Barrow looks like one of the 12 Angry Men or Robert Whul in Batman 89. Maybe Colm Meaney

- He has a plant because of Hot Fuzz. tying his death to such an important and personal prop set an early confusing tone re: the Hotel and morality though.
- I love the timing the death to the plant falling thing

- I made up the word 'puseated'. It's such an effective invention that it earned a soft finger wag in one of our very first reviews but it also translates easily in Hotel en español

Barrow saw the last thing he would ever see, his plant puseated on the pavement. Whatever the water was doing, it's surely dead now.

Sr. Barrow vio lo último que jamás vería, escuchó a su planta estrellarse en el pavimento del callejón. O lo que quedaba de ella, porque para entonces seguramente estaría muerta.

sheet. Him, slick and wet appearing like a wet cat drenching the floor of my lobby; His plant looking like a twisted ghost, slowly smothering under his arm. He had no luggage save a short bag with his overnights in

- absolutely hate this line because it is clearly the same thought expressed twice and it uses wet twice three words apart and I didn't do rewrites so I never caught it until I heard the audio. Its maybe the only line in the whole show I wish I could change.

- Hotel's plumbing problem softly indicating it always looks the same. The show is really functioning at it's Tales From thee Cryptiest.

groan. The Hotel is very old. Very, very old. If you close a door the entire floor can hear you. If you take a shower, the entire building will know.

people do when they see the my good boy. But just then, right as Mr Barrow saw the last thing he would ever see, his plant puseated on the

- 'My good boy' ha ha that's hot

- I love this first episode so much i think it does a great job at being a tone setting pilot. I adore the way Kelly says that final line, pitch perfect. It's still my number 1 recommendation for an introductory episode for the show.

1.2 Janet Hurd

- Ah the bates motel. But with a michael meyers killer guy. Really wanted to demonstrate things are VERY different physically with familiar tropes.

- Guestbook! Cuz bates motel!
- The Managers little tvs! Sometimes she has tvs.

PATRONS

- She sleeps with her clothes on THAT CAN'T BE COMFY JANET
- Lobby Boy uncomfortable around women and bathroom stuff. Squeamish weirdo, norman bates, peter lorre stuff. You already know who this guy is

- Kelly is SO GOOD at screaming
- Can you see the shot of them watching the tvs with Janet in the background at the door screaming? Can you see it? They are so funny.

- The Manager monkey's paw jason vorheez away by turning off the TV. I love that.

1.3 Harry Brunt

- The Manager kills a houseless guy. An early attempt to detach morality from the Hotel.
- Brunt is a ferengi played by JeffreyCombs on multiple episode of deep space nine. I don't think Harry is named for him though.

THE MANAGER
A quiet night at the Hotel. They're all quiet nights. But like a storm over the ocean, if you break through the miasma you see it all. I can see

- I don't know what's up with the storm miasma line. I think I was writing a Mary Shelley* thing at the time too.

First Mentions

- Hotel policy!
- Endless hallway!

- Ohhh the Manager can just see him like Gary Mitchell. And she does the "maybe this is happening, maybe that is happening" thing. It's so dreamy.

HARRY
god bless.

that no one ever gets away. Ah, speak of the devil and he shall appear. This one doesn't look like he can

- Ugh that devil line too. I'd cut that too.
- And the god bless thing. I get what I was going for but it really sounds like it's hell sometimes in the first season. 'First season weirdness'

*The failed Mary Shelley musical that became The Theatre of Terror: Boo Wop

1.4 Ashley Brushes

- I don't know what the VIP thing was going to be. If anything. I think I was just trying out different little hooks.
- Hooks like not seeing this room or death but hearing about other rooms. Rooms that the Lobby Boy hates. (scary things being scared is always fun.)

- LB likes to watch sometimes though. Don't forget he's a monster too!

a list. Sometimes, for special guests, our VIP's, we have to prepare some special. I don't think a VIP is coming. I think the Manager, I think she came up with something lever and she wants to try it out. So I have been preparing for hours. I think. the Manager, she didn't tell me who the guest will be. She

THE LOBBY BOY (cont'd)
Sometimes I stay to watch. I won't watch in this room though. Everything's set up. It's in here, in

- Ohhh he's doing the 'i think' thing. Love that. Who knows what's actually happening?

guests, our VIP's, we have to prepare some special. I don't think a VIP is coming. I think the Manager, I think she came up with something lever and she wants to try it out. So I have

directions closely. I remember room 987, bloody holes. Puckering and slipping. Stinking snot and hot fat. I had to

- The icey ocean water room almost works as a foreshadowing of We Found The Hotel
- The bloody puckering room is a nice Bellhop retroactive nod

wings. Room 72 nice. Ice water, floor to ceiling and salty. Something in there swam in the dark. Room 1049 had the

- All those "no's" are Mark giving me two different reads and I think I left them in because I didn't notice. But it works for LB slow stilted cadence.

don't want to go back to
have to go back one last time.
No no oh no. I fight back a wretch. I nod to her. She does not smile. Not

- Fun to hear the Manager and not a guest in this episode! They didn't get a lot of scenes "together" back then

- When's he making these rooms? We ever gonna get to see that?

1.5 Arnold Jackson

- Named for Samuel L. **Jacskon**'s character Mr. **Arnold** in Jurassic Park.
- Jab at toxic masculinity with Arnold and the door couched in his persnickety nature.

- The pale creature waiting for him sat in his chair is an idea I repurposed from an old movie idea based on the very real fear of 'what if that happened to me?'

- This is probably ET's fault
- Also the long arms. (See also 'It Watches and It Smiles)
- Something staring passively from afar has always scared me. (see ET, The Shining, Ghostbusters, The Haunted Mansion ride,Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark)

- The 'notice what they changed oh no the exit is a wall' is from The Matrix
- See he asked to be left alone and so he's alone with the monster, confusing morality stuff again!

1.6 Mary Mallorie

- This really feels like an episode i just started without knowing where it was going
- Yeah see we get a Manager line and a guest line? I was just figuring out as i went

- LB nervous to talk to people. Me too LB.

- The Hotel's 'old electricity' and 'not liking when people scream' are a fascinating look into early efforts at fleshing her out.

- The "first floor" being an elevator ride away implies this is not in america. I think.

- The imagery of him standing effortlessly still while she's in a freefall hurricane in a void is practically Roger Rabbit. The show is by design fun and funny.
- He kills passively here. If he can even be said to have killed at all. He's scared always, but often not of scary things. He's Michael Myers. He's an alien. He's bugs bunny.

1.7 The Owner - I

- Graham's episodes and character were written after the first 8. As soon as Graham heard we were doing a horror podcast he volunteered his services and obviously i'm not gonna say 'hey no thanks' to THAT
- I knew Graham would be great as a BUSINESS MAN GUY and evil corporate monsters are always great fun
- This transformed the show from 'anthology scary room show' to 'cosmic horror soap opera'

- The wings flapping was most likely inspired by agent smith in the matrix reloaded. It never occurred to me to tie any bird imagery to the Owner until i saw fan art years later

She goes on and on. I recognize her. I think we've met before. I wouldn't have hired her, but I don't get to choose what form the staff t

- Nothing the Owner says in this first episode makes any sense now. I was throwing stuff at the wall. The whole show was an experiment to see what would happen if we made a horror show that was easy to produce. I didn't think farther ahead than the end of this season.

guest book across the counter to me. Tonight it's just as ornate at the Hotel. Thick and leatherbound. Heavy, gold-leaf pages. Only one name

- The multiple Manager and LB thing was an early idea of switching out actors if we ever do more seasons.

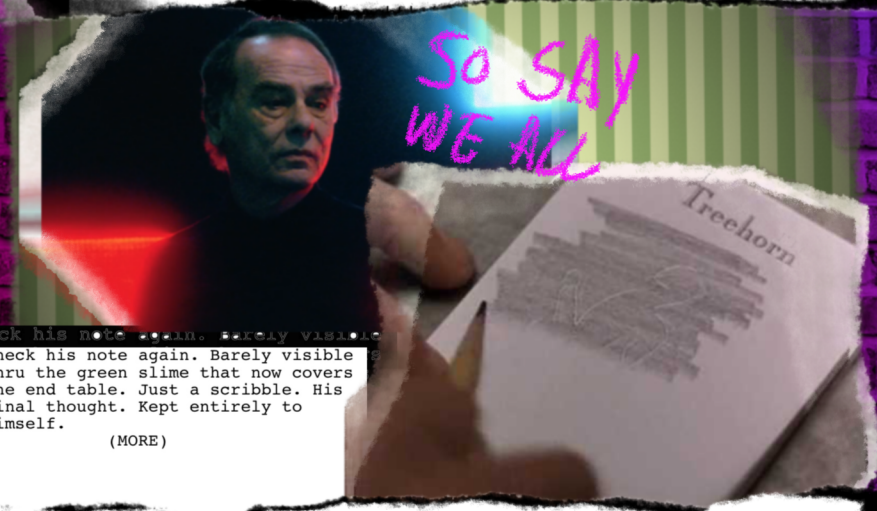
- I WORK VERY HARD TO AVOID USING THE WORD TELEPORT

1.8 Eric Broon

- Eric is based on my old buddy Andy (of Theatre of Tomorrow infamy) except in my mind Eric is a surfer guy. That is also why he hits on the Manager.
- Trying out more fun hooks here. The Hotel controlling what Eric sees. The weird suffocating slime. The Manager's 'curiosities that need to be satisfied'.
- Not sure what they 'need their bodies' for. Maybe she means only needs their bodies to kill them?

Some of the guests can't bear it. We take them all though. We only need their bodies, not their hearts and minds.

- 'Hearts and mind' is a line i lifted from Battlestar Galactica. I just liked the sound of it.



check his note again. Barely visible thru the green slime that now covers the end table. Just a scribble. His final thought. Kept entirely to himself.

(MORE)

- I think the written thought being unintelligible might be a Big Lebowski nod. I can't be sure because that final line is so good it feels set up.

THE MANAGER (cont'd)
I suppose all our final thoughts are known only to ourselves though.

Good line

1.9 Jenny Range

- I tried to do several things at once here that accidentally added up to a very incendiary episode
- Jenny is notably NICE! No morality!
- Except that they comment about how weird that is (even the episode description)
- The idea that because Jenny asked for a wakeup call her death changes??
- Or is the Manager punishing the LB because Jenny is nice to him?

What's a nice woman like her doing a place like this?

CW: Themes of horror and death.

- "Why is she here." twice is Mark giving me two different reads, but sometimes they sound good for his stammering confusion.
- "I don't like what happens when I upset my Manager" lines are multiple takes, again left in because it sounds good when the Lobby Boy is upset.
- "Usually" trusts her?? Heartbreaking implications all around.
- I like the idea that we build up to some weird death we never get to see (like Ashley Brushes) but because of everything else going on in this episode it has lots of potential meanings

1.10 The Owner - II

THE OWNER
Tonight I arrive before anyone else. Even the Hotel hasn't shown up yet. I experience what is. The void isn't [illegible] clamber that exists between. It was. Now it's a lobby. Middle class. Not clean, but smells like it. Couches provided, but not

- Even the Hotel hasn't shown up yet. What is this guys' deal?? He can go ANYWHERE
- So the line is meant to be "NOT clean, but smells like it." But I didn't catch it until too late. I think the line works in it's new form just fine though.
- "Management differ widely but a Lobby Boy is a Lobby Boy" is definitely a commentary on how capitalism views labor.
- "As if I had power over anything here" is all you need to know about the Owner.
- This is a really fucked up death, but it needed to be to impress the Owner.

- The "pull" shows up again in season 2. It's quite likely a similar pull as the one from the kitchen in Poltergeist or whatever was going on in the The Forgotten

1.11 Jacob Withers

- I think Jacob Withers outshines his death, which is definitely "perfectly fine."
- This is the episode that people cite for Lobby Boy knows how to cook

- I love how boring the 'Imperium Arms' sounds. More 12 angry men old fashioned play stuff from the guests

- "The most impercetible nod" is a kill bill vol. II refrence. The Manager is very Kill Billy

1.12 Mary Molly

- Mop bucket!

First mention

- Mary Molly and Mary Mallorie's names being similar is an indication only of the transparent limitations of my naming abilities.

- Trying out moor hooks. Starting out with the aftermath of the death and building up to it. The show is 'hearty horror stew' and must have in every mouthful a tasty chunk

- More lines left in the edit.

Happened a lot in season one

1.13 The Owner - III

- Tricky episode to write because I knew i needed 4 but didn't have anything for him to do

- "They all have the same face" doing a lot of heavy lifting squaring this season with future 'canon'
- The other Owner face he sees following him was meant to try and give him some sort of conflict or arc or destination.
- The Owner - V tries to clean some of this up.

Spoilers

- "How i hate it here" is a reference to the first Charlie Brown comic

- 'Mundane trappings and deadly aesthetics'. Come on that's great.

- This is where the 'behind the curtain' arc in season 5 got its name

that be. best not to pull at any errant thread. This place is terrifying enough without unraveling it and peeking behind the frayed curtains.

1.14 Harold Pike

- I figured someone, out of all 8 billion of us, at least ONE person would have at least an IDEA of what was going on. I figured Harold was more like the Staff in nature than not. Whatever he is, he thinks it's probably best that the Hotel kills him.

- The scary things are based on the little aliens that swarm Scully in the X-Files that one time. In the tunnel or whatever.

- Also those scary baby things from Silent Hill (2006)

- Also Galaxy Quest

- The Lobby Boy Crying on the floor while the things patter by is my Lotr Wring Wraith Prancing Pony moment

1.15 Noreen

- Probably named for the Frank Zappa song Doreen
- This was
- Probably
- This was meant to be the original season finale. Hence the exciting 'famous' guest.

- Originally she was a Tiffany or Robin Sparkles type. A musician with one hit that never took off but never stopped trying.

- Then came Rat's aging Maryln Monroe.

- And eventually the Angelyne type we see in Trespasses.

- LB once again uncomfortable with women (lipstick)

THE LOBBY BOY
But she has on bright lipstick so I
don't like looking at that either. I

1.16 The Owner - IV

- First Hotel/Owner conversation!
- Love that we get weird monster Hotel first

- I could have edited these powers that be noises a little more call and response sounding
- But it helps sell how truly alien the Hotel is

- Powers that be noises provided by Mark Whitten

- More Owner season 1 gobblygook

THE OWNER (cont'd)
Yes, There is. It's not relevant to my report so I didn't presume to waste your time. There was another in the Hotel. Everywhere I shifted I saw him. He wasn't one of the many Manager of Lobby Boys. He wasn't a guest either, he...

He knew me, and I knew him. He didn't look familiar to me though I did recognize him. In every Hotel, he watched me. He followed me and I felt his hateful intent. He's cruel. Who is he?

- "I want to stay!" is of course from the original Star Trek episode Charlie X, a terrifying moment that always left me scared and unsettled as a child but ended up informing so much of the Owner's character.

It's Star Trek All The Way Down

Sign the Guest Book

favorite episode